



Tooth Talk

The newsletter of the Miles of Smiles Inc. Portable Dental Program

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Bridging the gap

Breaking the barriers



A number of barriers limit access to dental care for low-income children. These include:

- **Lack of dental insurance.** There are more than 8,500 children living in the Northland area without dental insurance.
- **Inadequate dental insurance.** For the 17,513 Northland children on a Missouri Health Net plan (Medicaid), there are a total of three dentists in their area who will accept their coverage. Even then, Medicaid insurance does not reimburse the full cost of actual care.
- **Inability to pay.** Families without insurance or those on Medicaid live below federal poverty level and are simply unable

to cover the cost of dental care without insurance.

- **Inflexible jobs.** Many of these low-income families are led by parents with hourly rate jobs. Their jobs are inflexible with time off, and many fear that they will lose their jobs if they miss too much time from work.

Transportation to a dentist appointment is also an issue if families do not own a car or do not live near public transportation options. Miles of Smiles helps bypass these barriers by taking the dental care to the schools at no cost to qualifying families. ♦

Words of wisdom

Children in need

Miles of Smiles is pleased to announce that we have funding from the United Way in 2011.



Christy May
Executive Director

As a new United Way agency, this demonstrates a huge development milestone for Miles of Smiles. And it will open the door for other charitable contributions.

While we are proud of our achievements and growth, we still need your help. Since 2000, Platte county has experienced a 95 percent increase in residents living in poverty. And Clay county has experienced a 54 percent increase. We're also seeing growth in the number of people in these counties who are uninsured or underinsured.

To continue to meet our service goals, we need your help now more than ever. Please consider a charitable donation to Miles of Smiles to help us continue to meet the needs of needy children. The donation you make today could mean a healthier mouth—and a healthier future—for children in need. Contact us at (816) 413-9009 to talk about how you can help. ♦

Mark your calendar: Tee up to help children

Don't miss the Argosy Casino, Hotel and Spa annual charitable golf tournament that benefits Miles of Smiles.

Location:
National Golf Course
9300 Northwest 63rd St.
Parkville, Mo. 64152

Date:
August 22, with a shot
gun start at 10 a.m.



Miles of Smiles: It's about the children

For the Miles of Smiles team, it's working with the kids that makes their jobs fulfilling. Dental Assistant Marcy LaMarr shares this story about a special patient who touched her heart:

Last November we began seeing a five-year-old boy named Carlos, who had never been to the dentist before. The sweet expression on his face melted into fear as we explained he had eight cavities we needed to fill. We calmed his fears, cleaned his teeth, and he left his first visit excited, taking home a brand new toothbrush.

By the second visit Carlos' worries returned full force. Using our calmest voices, we walked him through his treatment and answered all of his questions. At the end of the appointment, Carlos was so excited that we'd fixed his teeth. As a thank you, he offered the best gift of all—he sang to us. At first he was a little shy, and we couldn't help smiling as he sang "Baby" by Justin Bieber.

With a little sweet-talking we managed to convince him to sing an encore by Justin Timberlake. At the end of the day it makes you feel great to know that you can help a child overcome stage fright—and his dental fears.

Dr. Barbara Schupp also shares this story of a special child she'll never forget:

Sometimes in the process of providing dental care, we receive more than we give. This was certainly true with an 11-year-old refugee we recently treated. This brave young man spent the first 10 years of his life in a refugee camp. Despite the language barrier, he demonstrated the drive to survive, the desire to learn, a positive attitude, and an engaging smile.

As his first contact with dentistry, we played a vital role in shaping the future of his oral health. When I examined him, I noticed he had numerous teeth to re-

store and a few primary teeth to remove. Through an interpreter at the school, we explained his dental needs to his family. He quickly learned brushing and flossing techniques, and he never missed an opportunity to flash a smile when he passed us in the hallway.

He had several appointments with Miles of Smiles while we were at his school, and he always thanked us for taking care of him. It was a privilege to be able to play an influential part in helping him achieve oral health. ♦

Thank you!

Miles of Smiles would like to extend a special thank you to Valencia Endodontic Associates for performing root canals for so many of our patients.



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